What is claimed is:

1. A food product dispenser comprising:

a food delivery mechanism, comprising:

a food source configured for receiving a food or food component,

a food conduit associated with the food source for receiving the food or food component therefrom, and

a dispensing mechanism configured for dispensing servings of the food or food component from the conduit along a dispensing path;

a cleansing mechanism comprising a cleansing conduit associated with the food delivery mechanism for directing a cleansing fluid along a cleansing fluid path in cleansing association with the food delivery mechanism under conditions for performing a cleansing operation on at least a portion of the dispensing path; and

a controller operably associated with the cleansing mechanism for activating the cleansing mechanism to cleanse the portion of the dispensing path automatically in response to predetermined conditions,

wherein the controller, delivery mechanism and cleansing mechanism are configured to switch between the dispensing of the servings and the cleansing operation at a plurality of intervals during a day without substantial intervention from an operator.

2. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the cleansing mechanism is configured for conducting the cleansing operation without a substantial interruption of the delivery mechanism.

3. The dispenser of claim 2, wherein the cleansing operation has a duration that is selected to interrupt the dispenser for between about 10 and 20 minutes.

4. The dispenser of claim 1, further comprising an operator annunciator, wherein the controller is operably associated

with the annunciator to cause the annunciator to prompt an operator to activate the cleansing operation.

5. The dispenser of claim 1, further comprising at least one of a timer and a sensor, the timer configured for timing intervals between cleansing operations, wherein the controller is associated with at least one of the timer and the sensor for activating the cleansing mechanism based on information received from at least one of the timer and the sensor.

6. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the cleansing operation comprises a sanitizing operation to sanitize the portion of the dispensing path.

7. The dispenser of claim 6, wherein the sanitizing operation is configured for automatically delivering water at a temperature between 75°C and 95°C at a predetermined time.

8. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the cleansing mechanism is configured for performing first and second cleansing operations that are different from each other.

9. The dispenser of claim 8, wherein the controller is configured for automatically operating the cleansing mechanism for selectively conducting the first or second cleansing operation.

10. The dispenser of claim 8, wherein the first cleansing operation comprises a sanitizing operation, and the second cleansing operation comprises a cleaning and sanitizing operation.

11. The dispenser of claim 8, wherein the first cleansing operation a cleaning operation, and the second cleansing operation comprises a sanitizing operation.

12. The dispenser of claim 10, wherein the controller is configured to conduct the first cleansing operation several times per day.

13. The dispenser of claim 11, wherein the cleansing mechanism is configured to conduct the first cleansing operation using a cleansing fluid including at least one of (i) a detergent, (ii) a caustic material, and (iii) an acid material and the second cleansing operation using hot water.

14. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the dispenser is configured to dispense servings of up to about 10 servings at a time sized for individual consumption.

15. The dispenser of claim 14, wherein the dispenser is configured to dispense a single serving at a time.

16. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the cleansing mechanism is configured for recirculating the cleansing fluid through the cleansing fluid path.

17. The dispenser of claim 16, further comprising a heating device configured to heat the cleansing fluid as the cleansing fluid is recirculated through the cleansing fluid path.

18. The dispenser of claim 16, wherein the cleansing mechanism includes a reservoir in fluid communication with the cleansing fluid path configured to hold a volume of the cleansing fluid.

19. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to activate the cleansing mechanism at predetermined intervals for sanitizing a portion of the delivery mechanism.

20. The dispenser of claim 1, further comprising a dispenser housing that houses the food source, food conduit, dispensing mechanism and cleansing mechanism.

21. The dispenser of claim 20, wherein it is unnecessary for an operator to connect an external source of food product or cleansing solution to perform a dispensing or cleansing operation.

22. The dispenser of claim 1, wherein the cleansing mechanism is operatively associated with the food conduit and dispensing path and is configured to cleanse each of the food conduit, dispensing mechanism and cleansing mechanism.

23. A method for operating a food product dispenser comprising:

dispensing servings of a food or food component from a food delivery mechanism along a dispensing path;

directing a cleansing fluid along a cleansing fluid path which is operatively associated with the food delivery mechanism to conduct a cleansing operation on at least a portion of the dispensing path; and

switching between the dispensing of the food or food component and conducting the cleansing operation at a plurality of intervals during a day without substantial intervention of an operator.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein the cleansing fluid comprises water and is directed along the cleansing fluid path to sanitize a portion of the fluid path.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein water is directed at an average fluid velocity between about 0.2 m/s and 2.0 m/s to cause flow along the path.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein water is directed at a temperature between about 75C and 95C.

27. The method of claim 23, wherein the fluid is directed once about every ten minutes to every 12 hours.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein water is directed for between about 30 seconds to 30 minutes.

29. The method of claim 23, wherein the a first cleansing operation is conducted at a first interval a plurality of times before a second, different, cleansing operation is conducted at a second interval.

30. The method of claim 23, further comprising heating the cleansing fluid in the fluid path.

31. The method of claim 23, further including automatically determining with a controller device when a cleansing operation will begin and sending a cleansing start signal to initiate the cleansing operation.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the cleansing start signal automatically starts a cleansing operation.

33. The method of claim 31, wherein the cleansing start signal notifies an operator to activate a cleansing operation.

34. The method of claim 31, wherein it is not necessary to connect an external source of cleansing fluid to perform the cleansing operation.